

Abstract

This thesis works on the assumption that *Northanger Abbey* is a parody of two literary genres and that is Gothic Novel and English Novel. It is also believed that the novel is a coming-of-age tale – a Bildungsroman – which revolves around the issue of reading; reading books and people.

The starting point was an analysis of Austen's own views and overall attitude regarding literary traditions, which can be described in the following way. Firstly, the novelist disagreed with the portrayal of characters in novels – she believed that they were depicted in stereotypical ways and that there was hardly anything realistic about them – and she also did not support the Gothic revival which was prominent and very popular during her life. Austen believed that situations and characters in novels should resemble real life. She was not impressed by the obsession of the fantastic and supernatural. Consequently, she found great humour in creating a heroine who is obsessed with Gothic novels and who fails to distinguish between her favourite fiction and reality. Catherine imagines that real life is just the same as in her favourite novels. Such an error in her judgement leads to several fatal mistakes. The novel is interwoven with Gothic references and imagery. Together, this sets *Northanger Abbey* as a parody of Gothic fiction.

All six novels of Jane Austen have one prominent feature in common: a heroine. The plot usually revolves around her pursuit of happiness which ultimately means marriage. However, in *Northanger Abbey*, Austen plays around with the word heroine. On one hand, the protagonist of the novel corresponds with one of the two meanings because she is the main character of the story. Other than that, Catherine Morland – the heroine of the novel – is not a skilled goddess. Instead, she is rather plain, dull and naive. She is not appealing at all. Yet readers know she is a heroine because Austen decided so. This sets the novel as a parody of novel conventions.

Lastly, the novel is also a coming-of-age tale. It underlines Catherine's maturation and development into an acceptable – but also a fallible - heroine. It is achieved with the help of other characters who assume a large space in the novel and who lead her on her journey to maturation, intentionally but also unintentionally. By the end of her story, Catherine justifies the position she was already given at the beginning. Although she is still imperfect, she is also realistic.

The main aim of this thesis is to find the reasons for such genre diversity. Therefore, the work is divided into three main sections, according to the genre. The focus is on Catherine Morland and her lack of knowledge which is portrayed in her inability to read characters and

landscape around her, on Gothic references and imagery, as well as on the Bildungsroman aspect of the novel – including the actual process of maturation and how it is achieved in the case of Catherine and who participates in the process. To support these arguments, examples from other Austen's novels will be used, mainly to highlight the contrast between other heroines, depiction of landscape, the role of mentor lover, the level of knowledge and lastly, the use of irony.

The author of this thesis hope to come to the conclusion that Jane Austen chose to use parody in *Northanger Abbey* in order to underline the realism hidden in the development of Catherine Morland and to justify her position of a heroine.